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Contra foes dispute charge of media disinformation

By James Morrison
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The director of the National Security Archive, a clearinghouse for declassified government documents, said yesterday that his organization is helping in the congressional investigation of allegations of corruption by leaders of the Nicaraguan resistance.

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Archive director Scott Armstrong, a former reporter for The Washington Post, said the archive is responding to requests from "some congressional offices to provide information regarding the Nicaraguan democratic resistance . . . including information about its orgins, its source of support and its fiscal practices."

But he said accusations by Philip Mabry, an informant in a congressional investigation, that Mr. Armstrong's organization is part of a disinformation campaign are "false and inflammatory."

Mr. Mabry, however, did not repeat yesterday from his characterization of the archive as part of a campaign against the rebels. He said it appeared to be the "command center."

He has described an anti-rebel network that includes the archive; the congressonal offices of Sen. John Kerry, Massachusetts Democrat, and Rep. Michael Barnes, Maryland Democrat; and the International Center for Development Policy, an organization run by Robert White, former U.S. ambassador to El Salvador, who strongly opposes President Reagan's Central America policies.

Mr. Barnes this week opened a hearing into charges that millions of dollars in U.S. aid had been diverted to off-shore banks and private persons. Mr. Kerry wants Senate Foreign Relatons Committee Chairman Richard Lugar to hold hearings on charges of gun-running, drug-smuggling and assassination plots involving the rebels.

Mr. Mabry, who organized Americans for Human Rights to try to ship materials to the rebels, said he and two associates were paid $18,000 in expenses for two trips to Washington to meet with investigators and spent two days discussing their suspicions at the archive offices. A spokesman for the Center for Development Policy said it paid their expenses but could not recall the exact amounts.

Mr. Armstrong said he and others from his staff met with Mr. Mabry only once and dismissed his charges as groundless.

"He said he worked for the CIA. I dismissed the guy as a nut. He made all sorts of allegations against the White House and all sorts of National Security Council officials," Mr. Armstrong said.

He said Mr. Mabry claimed to have infiltrated the Ku Klux Klan for the Central Intelligence Agency in the late 1950s, and that he reported directly to Alabama Gov. George Wallace, Mr. Armstrong said.

Mr. Mabry said he had never claimed to work for the CIA, but said he supports the agency. He said he infiltrated the Klan for the Alabama State Police and reported through a state police commander to Mr. Wallace, who was first elected governor in 1962.

He characterized Mr. Armstrong's claims as "their method of trying to keep themselves clear of anyone asking questions."

Mr. Armstrong said representatives of Mr. Kerry's office and the Center for Development Policy brought Mr. Mabry to the archive because he told them he had important government documents.

"We're only interested in documentation," Mr. Armstrong said, describing the archive as a repository for declassified and unclassified government documents obtained through the Freedom of Information Act.

Some of the documents "appeared to have been altered," Mr. Armstrong said. "We determined he had no credible evidence and we declined to waste further time with Mr. Mabry."

Mr. Mabry said he has no government documents.

Richard McCall, an aide to Sen. Kerry, said Mr. Mabry supplied "a lot of useful information" to the congressional investigation.

Mr. Mabry said he became suspicious when he received reports from resistance sources that such supplies as military uniforms and medicine were not reaching the fighters.

Earlier this year, he said, he heard that Sen. Kerry was investigating corruption charges and offered to supply information to the probe.

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